

THE IBIS.

No. V. JANUARY 1860.

I.—*Notes on Birds observed in the Ionian Islands, and the Provinces of Albania proper, Epirus, Acarnania, and Montenegro.*

By the Hon. THOMAS L. POWYS, F.Z.S.

THE following notes were taken between the beginning of January 1857 and the end of July 1858. They are almost entirely the results of my own observation; and in the few instances in which this is not the case, the information was given me by persons on whose accuracy I could depend. My observations were chiefly made during shooting expeditions in the winter, as I had not become sufficiently inured to the summer heats in 1857 to explore the marshes of the mainland, or the olive-groves and *Arbutus*-coverts of Corfu; and during the same season of 1858 I was prevented from so doing by indisposition. These causes necessarily render my list of summer migrants very imperfect. I may also mention that I had no work on ornithology to refer to, except Temminck's 'Manuel,' and only one friend and companion who was at all interested in the subject of birds and their habits. I therefore claim the indulgence of the readers of 'The Ibis' for the many imperfections which they will doubtless discover in the following notes, and, "unaccustomed as I am to public writing," for deficiencies and rawness of style.

1. GRIFFON VULTURE. (*Gyps fulvus*.)

This Vulture is very abundant in Epirus, and indeed in all parts of the mainland which I have visited during the winter months. At Butrinto, a favourite shooting resort from Corfu, I have observed great numbers, particularly during the rainy

weather of January and February of 1857, when they were attracted by the quantities of horses and cattle which died, and were left to decay in the marshes. Having mentioned to *a* (or, more properly speaking, to *the*) bird-stuffer of Corfu that I should like to have one of these birds alive, he in a few days procured me four from the mainland. They were all wounded, apparently by swords or knives, and three died soon after I first saw them. I administered gin-and-water and bullock's liver internally, and olive-oil externally to the fourth, who soon recovered sufficiently to lacerate my hands whenever I attempted to touch him, and eventually escaped with about five feet of stout rope attached to his leg. I never could discover that these Vultures bred in the neighbourhood of the coast; but a pair or two are to be observed at almost all seasons in the vicinity of Santa Quaranta, Tre Scoglie, Butrinto, Ptelia, Pagania, Livitazza, and Phanari, small harbours on the coast of Epirus frequented by sportsmen from Corfu.

2. CINEREOUS VULTURE. (*Vultur monachus*) ?

I once, and once only, observed a very large black-looking Vulture engaged on the remains of a horse, near Butrinto, in the winter of 1857. It certainly was not *Gyps fulvus*. The Corfu bird-preserve told me that he had seen a Black Vulture from the mainland, but that it was very rare. This species is common in the island of Sardinia.

3. EGYPTIAN VULTURE. (*Neophron percnopterus*.)

Very common in summer on the mainland. A pair bred in 1857 in a low sea-cliff near Ptelia, about seven miles from Corfu, across the channel which separates the island from Albania, or more properly Epirus. I have been assured that it also breeds on San Salvador in the island of Corfu. The first I recognized was near Prevesa, in the Gulf of Arta, on the 15th of March, 1857. I have never observed them later than the beginning of September, and I never saw a specimen except in the white adult plumage.

4. BEARDED VULTURE. (*Gypaëtus barbatus*) ?

I can speak almost confidently, though not with complete certainty, of having observed this species on three separate

occasions in Epirus and Ætolia. The first instance was on the 29th December, 1857, when shooting near the village of Kinouria, at the head of the lake of Butrinto. I then noticed a large vulturine-looking bird with a wedge-shaped tail, sailing at a considerable height, among a party of Griffon Vultures; his flight struck me as much lighter and more falconine than that of his companions; I noticed also the rich tawny-red colour of his breast. The only reason I had to doubt to what species he belonged arose from his small size, and I went on my way, after he had disappeared, deeply pondering on what he could be. The second time I noticed a Lämmergeyer was at Phanari, on the coast of Epirus. This time he came within twenty yards of us, as we were woodcock shooting, and received three barrels of No. 8 with no apparent effect. I was again in this instance struck by the small size of the bird; but there was the wedge-shaped tail—and what could he be but "*Barbuddu*," as the Sardes call him? The third instance was in Acarnania, near Port Platea, not far from the town of Tragomesti. This time there were a pair, and nothing to complain of as regards size. They were enormous birds and very dark coloured; in fact, till they came well over my head, I fancied they were specimens of *Vultur monachus*; but the cuncate tail set my mind at rest. I may mention that I have since noticed this species in Sardinia, and never observed any individuals either so small as the first here mentioned, or nearly so dark-coloured as the second or third. I especially call the attention of ornithologists visiting Turkey and Greece to these facts, as my own conviction is that there is a new species akin to *G. barbatus* to be discovered in those countries.

5. GOLDEN EAGLE. (*Aquila chrysaëtos*.)

This species is not very common, as far as my own observation goes, in Albania and Epirus. I have not seen it more than twice—both times near Butrinto.

6. IMPERIAL EAGLE. (*Aquila heliaca*.)

Not rare in winter on the coasts of Epirus. I have often observed it near Butrinto, and on the 18th of January, 1857, picked up a very fine specimen, dying from wounds, on the banks of the Butrinto river. A friend found another dead in

the winter of 1858, in the great marsh between Santa Quaranta and Delvino in Epirus, about twenty miles north of Corfu. The Corfu bird-preserve assured me that this species breeds in the precipices of San Salvador in the island of Corfu. I have seen an individual of these species seize and carry off a Golden-Eye (*Anas clangula*), which had been wounded a few minutes previously by one of our party, whilst woodcock shooting near Butrinto. This is a much less wary species than the preceding, and will often allow one to approach within gunshot when perched on a tree looking out for wild-fowl, which seem to form its principal food in Albania.

7. SPOTTED EAGLE. (*Aquila navia*.)

Very abundant, in January and February 1857, in all the marshes of Epirus; less so, though still common, in the following winter. As soon as a gun is fired in any of the marshes about Butrinto, one or more of these birds is sure to appear, and keep flying about from tree to tree, apparently on the watch for prey, though I never saw them pursue any bird, and imagine that they feed chiefly upon rats, frogs, and such "small deer." I have seen this species several times in Corfu. I never observed it in summer, and, as far as I could find out, it is a regular winter visitor in Epirus, appearing in that country about the latter end of September, and remaining until the middle or end of March. I never saw one of this species except in or near marshes, and it is certainly the most tree-loving Eagle with which I am acquainted. It is not, according to my own observation, so common in Acarnania as in Epirus.

8. BONELLI'S EAGLE. (*Aquila bonellii*.)

I was shown a stuffed specimen of this Eagle at Corfu which was said to have been shot on the mainland, and I have several times observed birds in that country which I now believe to have been of this species. A pair haunted the precipitous face of a hill near Butrinto in the winter months of 1857 and 1858, and were the terror of any vultures or other birds of prey which passed near their abode. They were generally to be observed in fine weather, soaring at a great height in the air, and swooping fiercely at any bird larger than a pigeon which ventured to

linger in their neighbourhood. I have seen them drive away Vultures, Imperial and Spotted Eagles, Ravens, Crows, and even a Peregrine Falcon. They are at once distinguishable from every other species of Eagle with which I am acquainted by their falcon-like swoop, square-cut tail, and very shrill and piercing scream. I have been lying in wait in a thick reed-bed, watching the flocks of divers species of ducks, coots, and other water-birds which enliven the Albanian lakes and marshes, and have often remarked that whilst the said wild-fowl would take no notice whatever of the numerous Marsh-Harriers which are perpetually hanging about the skirts of the lakes, and would merely lift their heads and utter a warning quack on the appearance of a Spotted Eagle,—immediately that one of these eagle-teasers (as we nicknamed the present species) was visible, the coots would rise and scutter into the reeds, the necks of the ducks would be extended flat along the surface of the water, and the incessant screaming of the waterhens and rails be hushed till the tyrant had passed over. I have twice seen this species settle upon and begin to devour mallards which I had wounded, and which flew to some distance before falling dead, but I never succeeded in getting a shot at the robbers. I have observed this species near Butrinto, as before mentioned, at Livitazza, at the mouth of the Kalamas, and at Phanari at the mouth of the Acheron. I always observed it in pairs and haunting rocks near the marshes.

9. WHITE-TAILED EAGLE. (*Haliaëtus albicilla*.)

This species is often to be seen, though not abundant, in Epirus and Acarnania. A pair were almost always to be observed about the Bay of Butrinto in the autumn and winter. I watched a pair in February 1858 soaring and playing at a great height near the mouth of the Achelous on the mainland of Greece, about twenty miles east from the island of Ithaca. My Greek servant took two eggs of this species from a nest situate in the top of an old ash-tree in a wood on the banks of the Luro river, which runs into the Gulf of Arta, near the ruins of Nicopolis, and not far from the town of Prevesa: this was on the 17th of March, 1857. The old birds were very bold, and often came within gunshot of us; but I would not fire at them, as I did not want a specimen,

and the shepherds begged us not to kill them, as they bred there year after year, and kept away other birds of prey which were destructive to their lambs. When my servant was within a few feet of the nest, a large snake put his head out of a hole and hissed fiercely at him, but he having crossed himself and implored the aid of St. Spiridione, the patron of Corfu, went boldly on and took the eggs, which are now in the possession of Mr. Alfred Newton. All the birds of this species which I observed in Turkey and Greece were in adult plumage.

10. OSPREY. (*Pandion haliaëtus*.)

Appears in Corfu and Epirus in March and September in considerable numbers.

11. SHORT-TOED EAGLE. (*Circæetus gallicus*.)

I saw a Short-toed Eagle near Paleocastrizza in the island of Corfu, on the 7th of June, 1858. This was the only occasion on which I observed it in that part of Europe. I had previously become acquainted with this species near Tunis, and have since observed it, and obtained a specimen near Nice. I may here mention that I received a fine specimen of this bird alive from the Crimea in 1856. The favourite food of this individual was fish; and from what I have observed of the habits of these birds in a wild state, I should say that their food consists chiefly of reptiles and small fish, which they catch in the shallow lagoons and marshes. My bird was very fierce and untameable; and I have been informed by persons who have kept this species in captivity that it is generally wilder and more intractable than any other raptorial bird.

12. HONEY BUZZARD. (*Pernis apivora*.)

There is an immature specimen of this bird stuffed at Corfu, which was killed in the island by a friend of mine who has resided many years in the Ionian Islands and is fond of ornithology. He assured me it is the only one of this species that he ever saw, or heard of, either in the islands or in Albania. I saw a bird which I can assign to no other species, in an olive-grove near Prevesa in Epirus on the 21st of March, 1857.

13. COMMON BUZZARD. (*Buteo vulgaris*.)

This bird was very common in Corfu and Epirus during the

early part of 1857. It disappeared about the end of February; and I did not see a Buzzard again till the 7th of November, 1858, when I killed a fine specimen in the island, about six miles from the town of Corfu. I saw very few, either in the island or on the mainland, during the ensuing winter, but I observed one near Govino in the island in June 1858. It frequents the olive-groves in the island and the old woods of the mainland. A pair haunted the citadel-rock of Corfu during the first winter I passed there.

14. PEREGRINE FALCON. (*Falco peregrinus*.)

Common in Epirus in winter, where it is of great assistance to the wild-fowl shooter. Occasionally breeds in the island of Corfu, where I have observed it near Pelleka in April 1857. The friend mentioned above as having shot the Honey Buzzard, assured me that in the island of Cerigo this Falcon is very abundant, and feeds almost entirely on insects! Can he have mistaken La Marmora's Falcon (*Hypotriorchis eleonora*) for this species?

15. HOBBY. (*Hypotriorchis subbuteo*.)

Common in Corfu in spring and autumn. I have an immature specimen which was shot by an officer of the 3rd Buffs on the roof of Fort Neuf Barracks at Corfu in April 1857. I saw a Hobby near Cetinje, the chief town of Montenegro, in August 1857.

16. MERLIN. (*Hypotriorchis æsalon*.)

Of frequent occurrence in Epirus during the winter months. I have seen a Merlin shot in the Val di Roppa, a marshy valley about seven miles from the town of Corfu, much frequented by sportsmen for snipe-shooting. All the Merlins that I saw, dead and alive, during my stay in Greek waters were in the adult male plumage. I have seen as many as five wounded snipes carried off by a bird of this species in an hour's snipe-shooting near the mouth of the Butrinto river.

17. KESTREL. (*Tinnunculus alaudarius*.)

Not common, according to my own observation, in Epirus and Corfu. I have seen one or two Kestrels in the island in April

and May, and once shot one near Santa Quaranta in the winter of 1857.

18. LITTLE KESTREL. (*Tinnunculus cenchris*.)

Visits Corfu and the mainland in spring. I killed a specimen near Prevesa on the 20th of March, 1857, and bought a good pair in the Corfu market in the month of April of the following year. This and the following species are seen in small flocks of from five to ten or twelve, and appear to feed exclusively on insects.

19. ORANGE-LEGGED HOBBY. (*Erythropus vespertinus*.)

Arrives in Corfu, occasionally in great numbers, about the latter end of April. In the spring of 1857 I did not hear of, or see, more than two specimens in the Corfu market; but in April 1858 this species was very abundant in the Ionian Islands, particularly at Fano, a small rocky island to the north of Corfu, celebrated as a favourite resting-place for immense flights of quails during their vernal migration. This Hawk appears to be very fearless of man. I have watched a flock of five or six for upwards of an hour, during which time they often approached within ten or fifteen yards of where I sat, though I was in no way concealed. As far as my own observation goes, this species only remains for a few days in Corfu on its passage northwards. I have never heard of its occurrence in the island except in April and May. The stomach of a specimen which I saw skinned contained the remains of large night-flying moths. Both this species and the Common Hobby are to be observed on the wing as late as 8 or 9 P.M. This bird often alights on the ground, and runs with great ease and speed.

20. GOSHAWK. (*Astur palumbarius*.)

Not very common. I have observed it twice only in Epirus: the first time near Kinouria, where it stooped at a woodcock which I had wounded; this was on the 29th of December, 1857; and again at Butrinto, on the 2nd of January, 1858. Both these were immature specimens. I saw a fine pair of Goshawks stuffed at Santa Maura in March 1857, which had been killed in that island not many weeks before. I am told that this species is common and breeds in Albania proper, Montenegro,

and Bosnia, in which last province it is trained for taking hares. The Goshawk seems to be an object of special aversion to rooks, magpies, jays, &c., who will allow a buzzard, barrier, or falcon to remain unmolested in their haunts, but immediately pursue this species with loud cries, and every appearance of excessive hatred and defiance.

21. SPARROW HAWK. (*Accipiter nisus*.)

Very abundant in winter in Epirus, Acarnania, and Corfu. A few remain to breed.

22. KITE. (*Milvus regalis*.)

Not common in Epirus. I did not see a single specimen during the first winter that I passed among Greek Seas. I noticed a pair several times about Butrinto during the very severe frosts of December 1857 and January 1858, and found the species rather abundant in Acarnania in the last-named and following months. Among the fine oak forests in the neighbourhood of Tragamesti, a pair or two were generally to be seen, soaring in circles at a great elevation, and occasionally swooping down near the tree tops. The bird-stuffer at Corfu did not recognize this species by its Italian, Greek, or English names, and told me that he had never seen or heard of any hawk with a forked tail. The Greek shepherds in Acarnania, when we pointed out this species to them, said they had never before noticed it. From these circumstances I think we may infer that this species is a rare and only occasional visitor to these parts, though it is very common and a constant resident in Sicily and Calabria.

23. MARSH HARRIER. (*Circus æruginosus*.)

Perhaps the most abundant of the *Raptores* in these parts. It seemed to be less common during the last winter than in the first which I spent in these countries; but from two to a dozen were almost always to be seen in every marsh in Epirus, Acarnania, Albania, and Corfu. Very few remain to breed in these parts, the main body making its appearance in the beginning of November and disappearing in March. I once counted twenty-six of these birds on the wing together near Butrinto.

24. HEN HARRIER. (*Circus cyaneus*.)

Common, and breeds in Corfu and Epirus.

25. MONTAGUE'S HARRIER. (*Circus cineraceus*.)

Less common than the last species, but not rare in Epirus in winter. The great marsh of Livitazza is a favourite haunt of this Harrier.

[To be continued.]

II.—*On Birds collected or observed in the Republic of Honduras, with a short Account of a Journey across that country from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean.* By GEORGE CAVENDISH TAYLOR, F.R.G.S.

I PURPOSE giving some account of the birds collected or observed during a journey across the Central American Isthmus, from Fonseca Bay, on the Pacific Ocean, to Omoa, on the Atlantic, made in the winter of 1857-8, in company with Lieut.-Colonel Stanton, C.B., of the Royal Engineers, Mr. Amory Edwards, of New York, and others.

But before entering into a detailed account of the birds met with, I think it will be advisable to give such a description of our route, and of the country passed through, as may serve to render intelligible many allusions made in the subsequent notes. On meeting Colonel Stanton in New York, he informed me that he was going, under the direction of the Foreign Office, to Honduras, to report upon the feasibility of a scheme for constructing a railroad between the Gulf of Fonseca, on the Pacific, and Porto Caballos, on the Atlantic. To assist in the survey, three Sappers of the Royal Engineer Corps had been sent with him, one of whom was Corporal Church, lately returned, in company with Dr. Barth, from Kuka and Lake Tchad in Central Africa. Church carried a photographic apparatus with him, and made a large collection of photographs during our progress through the country.

Mr. Amory Edwards was connected with the promoters of the railroad, and having been previously in Honduras, and speaking Spanish fluently, was of the greatest service in carrying out the objects of the expedition. I hardly know how we should have got on without him. He was also of great assistance to me in my ornithological researches, as he had a taste for natural his-